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# How Zach Came to College





# HOW ZACH CAME TO COLLEGE.

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## CHAPTER I.

SPARTANBURG, one of the leading cities in the Piedmont region of South Carolina, was once a hamlet, absolutely wanting in city ways and city aspirations.

The modest little village was the "town", the market place, for the hardy mountaineers living in the border counties along the North Carolina line. To Spartanburg they brought their apples, chestnuts, turnips, cabbage, "taters" and their corn—as much of it as they did not turn into "mountain dew". Long trains of "mountain schooners", drawn by oxen and burdened with "garden truck and sich like" slowly winding their way "to town" were familiar scenes to the people living along the many country roads leading from the mountain fastnesses to Spartanburg. Nor can it be denied that the "sich like" meant not

infrequently the juice of the apple rather than the apple itself; for the sturdy mountaineer thought it not wrong to get his apples and corn over the hills with the least expense possible. What if it did mean the killing of a few revenue officers? If Uncle Sam got in the way of their support for wife and little ones, he must "go down."

A number of years prior to the Civil War, and for a decade after its close, Spartanburg boasted of one railroad, and Spartanburg was its northern terminus. That fact increased the importance of the little village, added to her dignity, and she became the shipping point for a considerable portion of upper South Carolina and not a little territory beyond the North Carolina line. So the wagon trains moved regularly, until Spartanburg's single railroad pushed its way to Asheville, and other roads came to emancipate the steer and make the "mountain schooner" a thing of the past.

One warm, lazy June day in the early 70's, there stood in a store door in Spartanburg two men—one, the proprietor, Major John A. Lee, the other a young mountaineer. The mountain lad had on

no coat, but stood six feet two inches, in his rough brogan boots, into the tops of which were stuffed his blue jeans trousers, and tipped the scales at 240 pounds. The pure air that surrounded his mountain home, and the regular daily work on the little farm, had developed him into a perfect animal. A coal-black moustache adorned his upper lip, while a well-shaped nose, slightly aquiline, and a pair of laughing brown eyes made him a man who would attract attention in any crowd. A single, knotted, twisted suspender wound its way across one of his shoulders and served the double purpose of holding up his trousers and affording a sling for one of his arms while he stood "at rest". The pantaloons were innocent of buttons, but their places were supplied by a rusty nail, and a thorn, the latter plucked from a thorn bush that stood by the road leading from his mountain home to the embryo city.

This attractive specimen of physical manhood knew little of books, but had learned much in the school of experience. He knew the haunts and habits of the mountain deer "as the seaman knows the sea", and to the raccoon and the 'possum was

a constant terror. And not a few of the hides of these animals, as well as the flesh of the deer, he sold in Spartanburg. He had watched men closely, had blushed because of many things that he knew to be wrong about him, and had dreamed of a higher life.

It was a dull day with the merchants. Few countrymen were in town, so our mountain lad and Major Lee talked leisurely of the weather, the change of the moon, and the prospects for a pinder crop. Our hero had great confidence in the big-hearted merchant, and no little admiration for the man that "knowed so much." He had sold him his load of "truck", and was just waiting for his steers to "eat a bite" before beginning his long journey homeward.

Stroking his heavy boots with one end of his long whip handle, the young man raised his brown eyes till they met those of his friend, and then said, with some hesitation:

"Major, what's that?"

"That's a bell, the College bell; they are having Commencement over there to-day", replied the gentle, sympathetic merchant.

"What is Commencement, Major, and what is a college?" asked the lad, this time an expression of intense interest spreading over his face.

The kind-hearted business man consumed several minutes endeavoring to convey to the mind of the young man some idea of what a college is supposed to be and do, and of what is meant by the word commencement when used in this way, and then said:

"I am going over to attend the exercises, won't you go along with me?"

"I don't care if I do" was the quick reply, and the mountaineer shambled off to his cart to get his coat with the apparent delight of one who has just received a new view of the possibilities of life.

The coat, when the dust from the oxen's fodder had been shaken from it, was donned, and the young man raked his chubby fingers through his somewhat disheveled locks, his heavy wool hat was pushed up in front, and he walked off with his friend, the words "college" and "commencement" ringing in his mind and heart as he struggled to get at their meaning—ringing almost

as sweetly and encouragingly as the old college bell rang into his natural ears. The coat did not fit well—a little too tight it was, with the sleeves just a shade too short, but what cared the young man for that? It was spun and woven and made by the stiffened fingers of his widowed mother, one of God's uncrowned queens, and it covered the back and the throbbing heart of a guileless man.

After a walk of fifteen minutes, the two reached the College and were conducted by the ushers to comfortable seats where they could hear every word spoken by the young men of the graduating class.

Wofford College had on her gala-day attire. The floral decorations, arranged by the hands of gentle women, were a revelation to our mountaineer. He had seen nature in all her loveliness among the crags and peaks and in the valleys of his mountain region. He loved the wild flowers with all his soul, and had plucked them often for his mother, but never before had he seen blossom and bud arrayed in such dazzling beauty. He had heard music, too, sweet music as it came

from the fiddle and the bow and rivaled the mellow laughter of the mountain lassie; he had "cut the pigeon wing," despite his heft, at many a country frolic; but never before had he heard such entrancing music as that string band poured into his opening soul.

The spacious auditorium was crowded with elegantly dressed women, wise men, and bubbling, buoyant youth. The mountaineer was bewildered, but it was delicious bewilderment. He was in a trance.

But the exercises must begin. The dazed mountaineer watched with intense interest the long line of students file into the hall and the fifteen members of the Senior Class take their seats on the rostrum preparatory to delivering their graduating speeches.

There were in that class some splendid speakers. They had the graces of the born orator. One of the number is to-day a distinguished lawyer in the city of New York. Our mountaineer looked and listened with all his might. Not a word escaped him, though many he did not un-

derstand. He was moved and swayed as never before in all his life.

After one particularly patriotic address in which the young orator spoke of the "Lost Cause, the Blood of Southern Boys" and "The Graves of the Gallant Confederate Dead," the band played Dixie, and the audience "went wild."

When the applause subsided, our mountaineer leaned over and whispered to his friend, the merchant: "Major, I'll speak up thar one o' these days."

The Major was surprised, almost amazed at what he heard, but made some courteous reply, and the two turned their attention to the next speaker.

The pleasant occasion came to a close. The valedictorian of the class "had his say." He talked to his classmates of the pleasant years spent together, of the hard-fought battles, of the victories and defeats, then wished them "a pleasant and successful voyage over life's tempestuous sea," and bade them a "long farewell." The diplomas were distributed after the orthodox fashion, the President's few parting words being



delivered in Latin, and the commencement was over.

The students repaired to their homes and boarding houses--the mountaineer to his cart. On the walk from the college, he spoke but few words. He was thoughtful. That day, a purpose was born in him. He is another man.

## CHAPTER II.

HASITLY yoking his steers, the mountaineer flung into the cart the few articles purchased in the morning, and turned his face homeward. The purchased articles were few—just a little sugar and coffee and a calico dress for his mother, the queen of his mountain home. That was a warm afternoon, the road was a long and dusty one, and the faithful oxen labored hard though they drew but little more than the weight of their patient master. Old Towser, the trusty watch-dog and constant companion of his master, trotted lazily under the bed of the cart, sometimes on the shady side. His tongue was hanging out and he panted fearfully. The master munched his lunch, a bit of bread and a part of a squirrel his mother had prepared for him. He ate, not because he was hungry, but from force of habit and to attest his appreciation of his mother's never-failing thoughtfulness of his comfort. The mountaineer was living over the experiences of the forenoon. The cattle had their own way.

After the sun had set, and while the song of the

whip-poor-will was echoing and re-echoing among the hills, they came to one of those beautiful streams that wind their way across upper Carolina, and man and beast satisfied their thirst, the mountaineer using his unlined wool hat as a dipper.

The mountaineer was accustomed to talking to his steers and his dog, and, no doubt, if these dumb brutes could have spoken, they would have expressed surprise at this strange, long silence of their master. The lapping of the dog, the evident pleasure experienced by the thirsty steers, as well as the quenching of his own thirst, reminded him of the fact that he had neglected to give the animals water before leaving Spartanburg, and immediately loosened his tongue.

"Towser, old fellow," said he, "that's right, lap it up, hit will do you good. You shell hev a good supper, too, as soon as we git home, a real good supper to make you strong. The warmints must be kept outen the corn—they musn't have a grain of it. I shall need it all. I'm gwine to college, Towser; won't you find the raccoon and

the squir'l fur me, and can't we git a few minks, and a bear or two?"

The ears and face of the brave old cur bore many evidences of deadly conflicts with the raccoon; and though he could not speak, he whined and barked his joyful assent to all that was proposed, and fairly churned the water in his efforts to kiss his master's hand. It was the only language the dog could command, but the master understood it.

Then he turned his attention to the steers, now quietly listening to all that had been said, and affectionately told them of his purpose.

How long they stood talking in the stream, they knew not, but the hooting of an owl just over the hill broke the spell, and the mountaineer began talking to his cattle in the language of the whipthong, a language full of meaning and music when the long whip is handled by a master of the art. As there is music for the trained hunter in the "mouthings" of his pack, so is there concord of sweet sounds for the expert driver in the regulated cracking of his whip.

The mountaineer noticed now for the first time

that they were still many miles from home and that it would be late, very late, before they could reach the end of their journey; nevertheless, the lash was not allowed to touch the backs of the steers one time, for they were tired and hungry, and their master was their friend. The song of the whipthong, however, quickened their pace somewhat, and they were now off, in dead earnest, on "the home stretch."

Towser, chilled by the cooling stream in which he had rested, leaped for joy, and barked his delight until the provoking echo of his own musical voice arrested his attention, and he ended the performance with an ominous growl. The master heard the echo, too, and thus soliloquized:

"I wonder whut that means and how it is. They call it echo—what is echo? I do not know. Can they tell me at college? Never mind, Towser, I shall find out and tell you whut it is."

Mile after mile was covered by the steady team, the master, meantime, lapsing into his thoughtful mood, after laughing at the antics of the spiteful little screech-owls that brushed the crown of his

wool hat with the tips of their wings and viciously snapped their beaks just above his head.

The stars were out now in all their beauty and grandeur. Occasionally a meteor darted across the heavens, and the mountaineer said to himself and to his dumb friends: "Now, what do that mean? 'They say it's a fallin' star. Do the star fall? My Bible tells me the mornin' stars sing together—does they really sing? I can't hear the music, but I b'lieve they do. I know they dance, and I sometimes think I can see 'em weepin'. Mebbe they do weep. Mebbe they weeps over the sins o' human critters. God knows—I don't."

Crossing a narrow valley now, on either side of which the hills seemed to rise one above another till they met the stars and rolled them in their laps, the joy of this uncultured son of the mountains knew no bounds, and he gave vent to his feelings by uttering a long repeated yell that reverberated among the hills until it seemed to shake their very foundations. Then taking up his whip, he said: "Now, Susie, old gal, sing us a song. See the hills and the stars and the val-

ley; now, talk it out, old gal, talk it out, good and strong."

Standing on tip-toe in the wagon, the mountaineer twirled the long whipthong above his head with such strength and such regularity of movement that the metric cracking of the deer skin seemed to provoke the whole mountain region to a fit of ceaseless laughter. Then he laughed a good-natured, jolly laugh that died away down the valley in a whisper; and, patting the long whip handle with his left hand, he said tenderly: "Well done, Susie, well done, that's the way to talk it out; I know your language: it is music to my soul—it is the song of my deer skin."

### CHAPTER III.

A FEW hundred yards farther, and old Towser pricked up his ears, and, with a sharp bark, bounded away to investigate a noise he heard ahead.

"Be careful, Towser, be careful, sir; you know your failin'; come back now to your place and keep cool."

Like his master, old Towser was game from tip to tip; each feared neither man nor devil—each

recognized but one master. But Towser was obedient, and, taking his place immediately in front of the steers, he stiffened every joint in his body and uttered an ominous growl that meant fight, and fight to the death, for the right of way.

After a few minutes, old Towser scented old Jack, one of the few negroes living among the mountains, and changed his growl to a whine of recognition.

“Hello, Marse Zach, dat you?”

“Hello, Uncle Jack, whut you doin’ out here this time o’ night?”

“Sho nuff, dat’s you; I knowed ’twus you. I heeard Susie’s voice; the Lawd bless yo’ soul, mun, you oughter bin whar I wus to hear her speak. She farly tar round dar ’mong de rocks and hills, and I think I could jess see you smile while you standin’ dar in the wagin tryin’ to hole’er down and mek ’er regilate ’er voice. Dat I did, suh; I could jess see you. Yes, suh, Susie sing a song right tonight. An ole Bill, my ole loss here, ole fool, he git skeerdt, an’ mek lak he gwine left me dar een de road, but I fetch



him a whack 'cross de hade wid dis stick an' fotch him to he senses. But I knowd 'twus you, an' ole Towser, dar, he might knowed 'twus me a-comin', fur it look lak any dog whut kin smell a 'coon good es ole Towser kin, oughter smell a nigger clean 'cross de mountain."

The mountaineer was not displeased that the old man liked the song of the whipthong, but noticed that he had not answered his question. So he repeated, "But whut you out so late fur tonight, Uncle Jack? And whut's dat you got thar in your cornsack? I think that's a jug."

"O, go long, Marse Zach; don't bodder 'bout whar ole nigger gwine. Don't you know I spec-table darkey?"

"Yes, Uncle Jack, I know you is lacked by the white folks, but le' me gi' you a piece o' my jaw: you quit totin' whiskey fur dese fellers. They'll git you into trouble. The fust news you know dese revenue officers will hev you in jail."

"Das so, Marse Zach, das so, an' I promise you I gwine quit it rite now. Dat I do."

Jack was a good old ante-bellum darkey that

everybody liked, but he had one great weakness: he loved whiskey. But, like many white men, he would promise reformation anywhere and at any time.

"Marse Zach, I mighty glad I meet you tonight. I jes' fixin' to go over ter yo' house tomorro' to tell you 'bout it."

"'Bout whut, Uncle Jack?"

"'Bout dat bee tree I fine yistiddy. Yas, suh, down dar not fur fum de Gum Spring on de lower eend uv yo' ma's plantation, I find a bee tree. De big poplar dar, suh; you know whar 'tis. An' I was jis' comin' over tomorro' ter tell you 'bout it an' ax you let me he'p cut it down an' gi' me leetle o' de honey fur Dinah an' de chillun."

"Why Uncle Jack, I am mighty glad to hear dat. Is you sho' it's a bee tree? An' does you think dere's much honey een it?"

"Sho, suh, sho; an' I'll bet ole Bill gin Towser dar's fifteen gallons honey in it."

"Well, we'll not bet 'bout it, but I hope you air right. It will be a great he'p to me. You see, Uncle Jack, I've got to make uver cent I kin this

summer; I mean to go off to college nex' October an' git a edication, an' dat honey will sell powerful well in Spartanburg."

"An', Marse Zach, whut is edication, an' whut you gwine do wid it when you git it?"

"To git a edication, Uncle Jack, means to larn somethin', an' git wise an' useful an' able to do somethin'."

"Bless my life, Marse Zach, you de wisest an' de ablist white man in dese mountains now, case I hear a mighty putty little gal say so yistiddy. She say you de bess lookin' man in North Caliny, and can trow down an' lick anything what walks on two foots. I don't see whut you gwine do wid dat thing you call edication when you git it."

The smile that had wreathed the face of the mountaineer quickly gave place to a frown. For the first time since the birth of his purpose, the thought, "What will Katie say of my plan?" rushed through his brain and for an instant took his breath. As soon as he could get control of himself he said, with some deliberation:

"Well, come over tomorrow at 8 o'clock, Uncle

Jack, and we'll cut the bee tree. Good night."

"Good night, Marse Zack, you'll have ter mek Susie sing anudder song, if dem steer git you home 'fo' de chicken crow."

Susie sang only a note or two, but they were full of meaning, and the now rested oxen bounded forward with alacrity. The mountaineer put Susie in her place and said with a deep, long-drawn sigh: "And what will Katie say?"

#### CHAPTER IV.

It was long after midnight before the tired steers halted under a shed in the yard of the humble mountain home. The driver patted their throbbing flanks and spoke kind, appreciative words to them, for he valued the services and respected the feelings of his faithful, dumb servants as only a man of heart can do. Having watered and fed the steers, the mountaineer went into the house and was met at the door by his devoted mother who had not closed her eyes, but had watched and waited through all the long hours for the home-coming of her son.

"Come in, my son, come in, you be late tonight;

I am so glad to see you," said his mother in a gentle, sweet voice.

"Thank you, mother," said the mountaineer, tenderly kissing the woman who had given so much of her life for his own comfort and happiness. "You haint bin scared, is you, mother?"

"No, no; I wasn't skeerdt,—but I couldn't he'p feelin' a leetle oneasy 'bout ye."

"Why, mother, nobody in dese mountings would hurt me."

"No brave man would, my son, but you know thar is so many mean people on de yerth. The folks knows that you don't favor mekin' and sellin' liquor, and I jist got to thinkin' that mebbe some of 'em mought like to have you outen the way. I couldn't sleep till I seed you safe and sound at home. But you must eat your supper,—I know you is monstous tired. I tried to keep your supper warm by pushin' the chunks together. The coffee is good and warm, but I'm afeard the bread is cold."

"Thank you, mother; I aint hongry, but I'll eat jest fur your sake,—you is so good an' kind to keep my supper warm fur me,"

“Did you feed the critters, son?” the thoughtful mother asked.

“Yes, mother, the steers is watered and fed.”

“Now then draw up a cheer and eat a bite yourself and then go to bed, fur it’s almost time to get up and you haint had a wink o’ sleep.”

The obedient son threw himself into a chair which he dragged to the side of a little table and devoutly gave thanks to God for all his blessings. The mother took a seat directly in front of her son, placed her elbows on the table, rested her chin in her hands and lovingly looked into the face of her boy who ate with a “comin’ appetite.”

“I want you to try some of this fresh honey, Zachie, with that bit o’ meat. I think you’ll find it nice; I robbed a gum to-day and got a fine chance and accordin’ to my taste hit is a fine quality too; hit ought to bring a good price in town, did you ax whut honey is fetchin’, son?”

By this time the mountaineer had tasted the honey and, smacking his lips, said: “It is certainly fine, mother, and will fetch the top o’ the market. But I furgit to ax the price; this is been

a big day fur me, an' I furgit sev'al things that I 'spected to 'tend to."

Here the son, knowing that he had before him one who could sympathize with him, though she might not understand or appreciate fully his plans, opened his mouth and heart, and told her all he had seen and much of what he had heard, and then said: "Mother, I want to go to college, and ef God will gi' me health, and you will he'p me, I will go, an' I'll promise you to make a man that you will be proud of. Will you he'p me, mother?"

The gentle little woman, whose heart throbbed always in unison with that of her stalwart son, brushed a tear from each eye with the corner of her homespun apron, and said in a calm, clear voice: "God knows I'm proud of you already, my son; you has always been a joy to your widowed mother, and you kin nuver do ennything to mek me love you better'n I do now; but your happiness is my happiness and your plans is my plans. When the Lord tuck yo' brave father, I promised Him that ef He would spar you to me I would do my best to bring you up in His fear. He has answered my prayers and you have not disappointed

me. These han's has worked hard for you, my son. They tremble sometimes now, but I can do a good deal yit, and you shill hev the best that I kin do to he'p you carry out your plans."

The big-hearted mountaineer was now standing by the side of his mother, and, taking her tenderly in his arms, he said, with a choking voice: "Thank you, precious mother, I want to larn somethin' fur your sake."

It was now late, or early, and time that both were sleeping, but the new purpose born the day before, and now become the purpose of both, promised such a radical change in the plans of both lives that sleep was banished from their eyes.

Long and lovingly talked mother and son. The mother's whole mind was now bent on devising ways and means for getting her son off to college.

"What time does you hev afore the college begins again, son?" asked the mother thoughtfully.

"I will have to leave home the fust of October, mother."



"Three months and a leetle better," said the mother, more to herself than to her son.

"We can do a good deal in that time, Zachie. There is plenty of grass now, and the cows is doin' well. Old Spec will be givin' milk in eight or ten days, and her milk is very rich. We'll deny ourselves and sell all the butter. Then the bees is doin' well, we'll sell lots o' honey. And I'll mek the chickens and eggs fetch us more money. I have twenty young turkeys now, and I found another turkey nest this mornin' with thirteen eggs in it. I'll do the best I kin with all these and card and spin and weave the wool. You can go to town every two weeks and turn some-thin' into money."

"Yes, mother, I know you will do much more'n yo' part. But, mother, it hurts me to hear you talk 'bout denyin' yourself anything."

"My dear son, is it not a pleasure for me to deny myself anything for you? Did I not deny myself many a night's sleep when I nursed you through that awful spell o' scarlet fever? And has not yo' love paid me fur all my trouble ten thousand times over?"

Then with a husky voice the mountaineer said: "God bless you, mother; with you on my side I kin do anything."

"Zachie, my son, do you hear that rooster? It is 'most day—do go to bed and git some sleep. You can't work bethout sleep."

"Fur yo' sake, mother, I'll go. I am not sleepy, but I'll go to bed, so that you may lie down an' git some rest. Good night."

Zach walked into his little room and, throwing himself upon his knees, he reverently thanked God for his loving, sympathetic mother; begged Him to spare her life many years, to spare his own life, and give him health and strength to carry out his plans for improving his mind, and promised in return a life of faithful service.

Then, jumping into bed, he slept the sleep of the innocent.

## CHAPTER V.

The sun was peeping in through the crack under the door that morning long before Zach's eyes opened to the light. How long he might have slept is not known, but "Uncle Jack" was true to his promise and came at the appointed

hour to cut the bee tree. Old Towser "winded" the African, yelped a note of warning and aroused his master from his slumbers. Zach was soon bathing his face in the cool, clear water that flowed out from the mountain not many feet from the back door of the little house, and felt ashamed that he had slept so late while his mother was up preparing his breakfast for him.

The two sat down to breakfast and, while eating, again discussed their plans for the summer. The son told his mother of old Jack's find near the Gum Spring, and of his promise to give the old negro some of the honey for his assistance in cutting the tree. The mother had known bee trees to be found containing many gallons of honey, and expressed the hope that old Jack's find might be a genuine bee tree and contain an abundance of honey and the honeycomb. "Your success or failure this mornin'," she said, "may be a sign of good or bad luck in your summer's work. But Zachie, my son, what will Katie say?"

"I have thought of that, mother; I have thought

of all that. Katie is a sensible gal, and will not stand in the way of my plans."

Old Jack waited as patiently as possible for the mountaineer to finish his breakfast, but stimulated by Dinah's joyful anticipations, was anxious to try the temper of his keen-bladed axe on the big bee tree. After a ten-minutes' walk the two stood at the roots of the large poplar not far from the big Gum Spring. The trained eye of the mountaineer saw at a glance that it was the home of a colony of bees, and, in all probability, contained many gallons of honey.

It was an unusually large tree. "My Lawd," said Uncle Jack, "Marse Zach, dat tree must be five foot tru de butt-cut."

"I think not, quite, Uncle Jack," said his friend, "but it mought be four foot."

"Well, howsoever, you'll arn de salt in your dinner 'fo' we git it cut down."

Towser and Zeno had been brought along and the mountaineer's old-fashioned flint-and-steel rifle. Every squirrel skin would go a little way toward swelling the fund necessary to defray his expenses at college.

Spitting on their hands after the manner of the woodsman, the two fell to work on the tree, and for several minutes the large chips flew thick and fast. Stopping to "get their wind," old Jack said: "Marse Zach, s'posin' der be a coon in dis tree. De bees is way up yonder, and I see a hole up dar 'bout thirty foot whut look powerful slick lak some warmint bin crawlin' een and out."

"I hope we shell find a coon or some squir'ls in thar, Uncle Jack. I hev had sich luck in my time."

"Me, too; and I notice old Towser mighty busy out dar smellin' 'bout dem logs—I b'lieve coon bin long dar since the chicken crow dis mornin'."

"Whar is Zeno? His nose is colder than Towser's," said the mountaineer, "and ef a coon's been along here since 4 o'clock, old Zeno will tell you 'bout it."

The words were scarcely spoken before old Zeno, known as the "strike dog," "gave mouth" just over the ridge.

"Dar now! Whut I tell you? Talk to him' old boy! Tell him 'bout it! When old Brer Coon put he foot on de groun' ol' Zeno sho to pass de

time a day wid him," ejaculated old Jack, as much delighted as if he had found a new, crisp ten-dollar bill. At the first note from Zeno old Towser, with bristles up, bounded across the ridge to join him.

"Dat mought be a squir'l old Zeno smell," the mountaineer said.

"No, suh, narry squir'l; didn't you see old Towser's bristles and hear him whine? No, suh; dat old pup spilin' fur a fight. Dogs know each udder's words jess same ez me an' you. When old Zeno smack he lips and say 'coon bin here,' Towser know jess de same lak you know when I tell you dis a bee tree. Yes, suh, dat a coon, an' you give old Zeno time and he'll show you whar dat old coon sleepin' now."

The old darkey was right. The trail was a cold one and it was some ten minutes before Towser could "give mouth" at all, but the old fellow kept up a continual whining because of his confidence in the accuracy of the statements made by his companion.

"That's a cold trail, Uncle Jack; let's go on

with the cuttin' and let the dogs cipher it out ef they kin," said the mountaineer.

"Dat's so," responded the old man, biting off a big quid from a twist of home-raised tobacco; "dat's a cole trail, but old Zeno will sho spile de rest uv dat ole coon dis mornin'."

With an occasional whoop of encouragement, the dogs were left to solve their own problem, while the two men plied their axes with renewed vigor, the old negro making with each stroke of his glittering blade that peculiar guttural noise so common among regular wood choppers while running a race.

After crawling over and under fences, walking many logs, paddling up and down the branch and crossing and recrossing the ridge a half score of times, old Towser, warming up for the fight and uttering faster and faster that abrupt, quick yelp characteristic of the experienced coon dog, the faithful canines wound up at the roots of the big poplar on which the men were cutting.

The old man's joy knew no bounds, for the anticipations of delicious wild honey were aug-

mented by the thought of roasted coon-meat. Indeed the white man and the black man drove their axes into the poplar with a will, this promise of a double reward greatly stimulating their efforts.

The tree fell at last. When it did, not one, but two coons ran out, to the infinite delight of both men and dogs. Each dog tackled a coon. Old Towser, in his effort to get at his, ran through the bees, now pouring out of the log in great numbers. The old veteran had fought many bloody battles, but never before had he tackled coon and bees at the same time? He whined pit- eously, but never for once did he loosen his grip till he heard the cracking of the coon's breast bones and felt the ominous quivering of his muscles. The old negro saw the predicament of the notorious coon fighter and ran to his assistance. To his amazement the bees, with one accord, left the dog and literally covered him. For a while the old man got young again. He was "the combination of the mule and billy goat—he kicked with one end and butted with the other." "My



Lawd, Marse Zach," he screamed, "come hep me fight dese bees! Geminy, Moses and Dinah, dey's killin' me! For Gawd's sake Marse Zach, hep me git my clothes off, der's ten thousand in my britches." The old fellow had by this time rid himself of his tattered shirt and was vainly tugging at his pantaloons and rolling over on the ground.

"Run to the branch, you old fool!" cried the mountaineer. "Get in the water!"

Jack lost no time in getting to the stream and buried himself in the water. The two men had neglected to take precautionary measures against the possible attack of the bees, and the old darkey was now paying the penalty of their thoughtlessness.

"Marse Zach," he said, as soon as he could speak, "how de name er Gawd kin sich things ez dem mek honey? Fo' Gawd, dey kin sting wid one eend an' bite wid t'other. My eyes is swellin', Marse Zach, an' yer some de leetle devils stickin' een my har yit."

The good-natured mountaineer, seeing the dogs

had dispatched both coons, had withdrawn a safe distance from the buzzing bees, and, convulsed with laughter, was rolling on the ground.

The cutting of the bee tree proved to be a profitable enterprise. The skins of the coons would be ready for market as soon as they could be dried, and the tree was packed with the finest kind of honey. Old Jack was given the flesh of the two coons, together with the honey he was promised for his assistance.

“Dinah an’ de chillun will grin over dis honey,” said Jack, “but es fur me, I’ll tek de coon meat; I got nuff dem bees. Bless Gawd, my head big is a bar’l now, and wun my eye dun clean shot. I don’t want no more honey. Good-bye, Marse Zach; guess next time old Towser fight coon an’ bees togedder he can fight it out hisself,—dis chile gwine tudder way.”

The mountaineer and his mother were well pleased with the success of the morning. The coon pelts were nailed to the barn door in the place of two others that were dried sufficiently for market. That night a careful and accurate inventory was

made of their available, marketable assets, and another trip to Spartanburg arranged for the following Monday morning.

### CHAPTER VI.

Saturday afternoon found Zach at the home of Joe Langford just a mile and a half from his own. Katie must know of his new purpose and the sooner the better, so he determined to inform her at once.

It had been a busy day with Katie. Everything was prepared now for the Sabbath, and she had just finished milking when the mountaineer walked into the yard. The two seated themselves under a large elm tree that stood not far from the door of the cottage, and Zach thought the rosy-cheeked girl of seventeen never looked sweeter in all her life. The mountain lassie did not conceal her pleasure at the presence of her lover, and talked with her accustomed ease and fluency; and when Zach beheld her in all her loveliness, and thought of losing her after all, his heart sank within him. A weaker man would have abandoned his purpose then and there, and set about completing the

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arrangements for wedding Katie the following November. But Zach was made of sterner stuff; with him the die was cast, and Zach was a man.

Taking his sweetheart's hand in his, he said in an awkward, stumbling way; "Katie, I loves you powerful, an' God knows you is the fust an' onliest gal I uver did love. I got sumpin to say to you an' sumpin to ax you, but I want you to think 'bont it good afore you answer me."

"Zachie," said the half-frightened girl, "whut is the matter wid you? Your hans is tremblin' and I never seed you look so tarrified,—whut is the matter?"

Then the poor fellow told her of all that he had seen and heard on his recent visit to Spartanburg, and told her of his purpose to have a diploma himself.

By this time he had gotten full control of himself and lifting the white fingers to his lips, he said in his gentlest tones:

"Katie, will you wait on me till I git my education? Don't answer me now, but think 'bout it, an' answer me nex' week."

The face of the lovely girl, this simple-hearted

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child of nature, was clouded for a few seconds, and she said with a noticeable tremor in her voice: "But, Zachie, hit will tek you so long. We can git 'long bethout all that expense an' trouble. Ma told me jist to-day that she would gi' me Old Brindle an' her calf an' a new feather bed, an' I already has six blankets and fourteen quilts. Weans kin git along." And Katie brushed a tear away that danced upon her long lashes in spite of the fact that she bit her lips in her efforts to keep it back.

"O yes; we could git along, but I wants more than jes to git along. I wants to larn sumpin and be sumpin and do sumpin. I don't know how long it will tek me to git a edication. Hit mought tek me five years; mebbe seven. But did not Jacob work seven long year fur his wife, an' can't I 'ford to work, not lak a sarvant, but lak a free man—can't I 'ford to labour an' study hard fur seven long year to larn sumpin an' mek myself worthy of sich a gal as you is?"

"Then you'll be a great man an' marry some rich city gal,—you will not look at Katie then" sobbed the innocent girl burying her face in her hands.

The mountaineer had grappled with the wounded bear in a death struggle and had licked a ruffian "out of his boots" for cursing him because of his opposition to "moonshining," but never before had he received such a shock as this. He was staggered by a sense of his utter helplessness. Trained in the school of experience to meet every emergency, however, he failed not in this. Raising the drooping head of the girl he loved, he looked into her tear-dimmed eyes and said:

"Katie, that hurts me. Don't do that. You don't understand me. I kin fetch you books an' you kin larn a powerful heap by readin' an' studyin' 'em. You know more than I does now. You have read several books an' I know you laks to read. I haint read nothin' but my Bible."

That was a happy stroke. The girl brushed the tears from her face and smiled a sweet smile into the eyes of her distressed lover. By some chance a copy of Longfellow's poems and one of Hawthorne's Grandfather's Chair had fallen into her hands and she had read and re-read them until she was recognized as "the smartest gal in the mountings."

It was the thought of getting other books and of becoming educated herself that dried Katie's tears and reinstated the beautiful dimples in her cheeks. Raising both her hands as if about to pat his two fat cheeks, she said, in tones that thrilled her heart-sick lover:

"Zachie, do forgive me; I am so foolish. I know that you love me and that it is all for the best. I am only seventeen, and you will bring me books and I shall see you every summer and every Christmas; of course I will wait on you ef it takes you ten years stiddier seven." What happened then? Well, just let that be Katie and Zachie's secret. The stars were shining now and winked at one another significantly.

The mountaineer was supremely happy when he told his mother that night of Katie's approval of his plans. The next day at meetin' he "heisted the hymes" and sang as he had never sung before.

Zach's next trip to Spartanburg was a successful one. He had no difficulty in disposing of his "garden truck," honey and skins, and got fair prices for all. Indeed, Providence seemed to smile on the mountaineer's efforts during the entire

summer. Many trips were made "to town," and never one without adding something to his small amount of cash. His mother was particularly successful with her dairy and poultry yard, and the mountaineer rejoiced that his hogs were entirely free from cholera and his sheep seldom disturbed by the hungry fox. Besides, his long rifle added not a few dimes to his exchequer, while Towser and Zeno did their full share.

## CHAPTER VII.

When the old college bell announced the opening of another session on the 1st of October, the mountaineer was there ready for business. He wore a bright new suit of blue jeans and a pair of heavy boots, rough but clean. So tall, so large, so muscular, he looked a giant among the boys and young men there assembled. Indeed, his presence would have been hailed with delight if the game of football as now played had been known.

"The big fellow" was examined and assigned to the preparatory department. He asked no favors, but his quiet, unostentatious, and earnest manner impressed faculty and students that he came for



business and meant to win. He hired one of the large rooms on the lower floor of the college building, installed a very small cooking stove, and in that room he lived, doing his own cooking and washing.

A few of the more fortunate students were disposed, at first, to laugh at the idea of such an undertaking, but it was not long until the "big fellow in blue jeans" had the respect of the entire student body.

Unused to study, the mountaineer found his work very difficult and his environment very trying. He missed the fresh mountain air and the freedom of his untrammelled mountain life. For the first few weeks, there were times that sorely tried his manhood. Once or twice he was on the verge of wishing he were back again by Katie's side and forever done with books and slates and college bells. But Zach was a man, and a man with a purpose, not a boy drifting with the tide. So, clinching his heavy fist, he brought it down on his little table with such force as almost crushed it, and said: "I am no genius, but I'm no fool; other men have

learned these lessons and I can do it, too." And he did.

The weeks passed rapidly by, and the mountaineer found himself fond of his work and in love with his teachers and associates. His genial disposition and the honest earnestness of the man drew others to him; and though he did not ask it, several of the best men in his class volunteered to assist him until he could "get on his feet."

The mountaineer's first year at college seemed to him very short as indeed is always the case with the earnest, faithful student who means to waste no time. But he was glad to get home again to press to his bosom his devoted mother and faithful ally, to romp with Towser and Zeno, and to look into the loving eyes of Katie, his black-eyed lassie.

The summer was spent very largely as was the previous one except that the mountaineer taught the public school for thirty days. In this he was eminently successful, winning the confidence of his pupils and, through them, the respect and admiration of their parents.

Many of his neighbors, particularly the young men and maidens of the neighborhood, believed that when Zach returned from college he would be 'bigetty and stuck up becace he's got some larnin.'" They were disappointed, and when, on the first Sabbath after his return, he walked up to a group standing in front of the church and said: "Why, hello, fellers, I am so glad to see you all again,—how do you all do?" their suspicions were thrown to the winds. He put his arm around the neck of one and said, "Bill, old fellow, how are you? You look just as natural as cornbread. Say Bill, how's your gal, is she as pretty as ever?"

Then Jim Snooks nudged Bob Satterwhite, and said, "By gosh, Bob, he aint a bit bigetty; dowled if he aint the same old Zach."

Uncle Jack who now lived in the cabin on the hill near the Gum Spring, had "pitched the crop" and had managed it well, at the same time looking after the hogs and sheep and giving Towser and Zeno an occasional run over the hills after the coons that were bold enough to make depredations on his "roasting ears." Zach helped him to 'lay by' the crop, before he turned school-master.

To him this was a delightful summer, though he spent not an idle day. Many an evening he spent with Katie, looking into the depths of her beautiful eyes and listening to her talk of the books he had sent and brought her.

But Zach was ready to return to college when the time came. The little taste he had had, the sip at the fountain of knowledge had developed and strengthened his determination to drink long and well. It was during this second year a little incident occurred that made the mountaineer the hero among the college boys.

Our reader will remember that this was during the "reconstruction period." Federal troops were garrisoned in almost every city and town in our state. The very presence of the blue-coats made the negroes impudent and insulting to an extent which our Northern friends have never been able to appreciate. All over the South, for a dozen years after the Civil war, there were frequent clashes between the two races. In some cases, men were driven to desperation, and blood was shed. To be shoved off the side-walk in one's own

town and be cursed by a former slave was just a little more than the blue-eyed Anglo-Saxon could stand. A clash between the soldiers and the Wofford College students on account of the latter's resistance of the impudence of the negroes was narrowly averted more than once.

There were not many negroes in Spartanburg, but a few who had made themselves very obnoxious to the white people and especially to the students. One tall, angular, copper-colored negro came to Spartanburg and claimed to have a diploma from one of the Northern colleges. He was for a time "The Reverend" among the negroes, and he harangued them nightly on social equality and their duty to have and to hold the reins of government. His brazen effrontery was intolerable and the wonder is that he was not shot to death before he left the town.

The man wore good clothes, an elegant silk hat, and twirled a dainty gold-headed cane in his much bejeweled fingers. He was large and strong—this educated negro—had jostled several of the student in his afternoon perambulations, and really seemed to enjoy the sport, apparently selecting his streets

for the purpose of meeting the boys. He had not seen the mountaineer. The fellow's insolence was discussed more than once by groups of indignant college boys. The mountaineer heard of it. He smiled, but said nothing.

### CHAPTER VIII.

It was a lovely afternoon in April. The mountaineer and two of his classmates strolled down Church Street. They had not gone far before they met the "educated gentleman of color" walking very leisurely, looking as wise as an owl and twirling his gold-headed cane. He walked close to the fence, as was his custom, meaning to force everyone he met to take the outside regardless of the direction he was going. The mountaineer saw his purpose, but knew that he and his companions were entitled to the inside and determined to have it at any cost. So he said to the boys: "Keep quiet and leave him to me." Stepping directly in front of the burly fellow, he seized him by the lapels of his tight-fitting coat and shook him until his silk hat and little cane rolled into the gutter; then giving him a twist and a kick, he dumped

the "educated gentleman of color" into the middle of the street, saying very calmly: "Now, sir, report that if you dare, and we'll tie a rock to your neck and feed you to the fishes in Lawson's Fork." It was never reported, nor was any other white person ever jostled on the streets of Spartanburg by this interloper.

The next vacation was spent, as was the preceding one, in teaching the short-term school and in marketing everything that could be spared from the garden, dairy and poultry yard.

Late in the summer, however, Zach determined to drop out of college for a year and teach school. A ten-month school was offered him, and after considering the matter thoroughly, he decided to take it. He kept up his studies, reviewing carefully all that he had been over at college and doing his level best to teach the mountain urchins as they had never been taught before. By close economy he saved enough money to defray his expenses the next two years at college.

This year out of college was very helpful to Zach. The careful review of his studies and his

efforts to teach Katie Latin and Algebra were of incalculable benefit to him. Many an evening, too, he and Katie spent reading and discussing works of fiction and history.

Though the year was helpful to Zach, it was not without its trials to the mountaineer and his black-eyed beauty. A quaint old divine once said: "There's a lot of human natur in man." There proved to be much "human natur" in these mountain coves. Katie's increasing beauty and brightness excited the envy of her childhood associates and they were not slow in letting her know that she was "gitten too smart fur her raisin." More than once she was accused of getting "book larnin" and of being "too bigitty fur the company of decent folks whut makes they livin with ther own hans."

The sun had not long peeped over the eastern horizon, and Mrs. Kelly, having finished her morning work, had just swept around the front door of her little cabin and seated herself in a splint-bottom chair by the side of the door, when Mrs. Flenigan rode leisurely by on her shambling "cork-screw" pony.



"Good mornin' Miss Flennigan, good mornin' and how's all at yo' house?" inquired Mrs. Kelly in a peculiar screaming voice that found its way into every crack and crevice of the neighboring hills.

"All well, thank God, and how's all wid youans?"

"Powerful poorly, powerful poorly, Miss Flennigan: Mose is got a sore toe, Jake sprained his ankle yistiddy and Liza's got a misery in her side this mornin,—but name a gracious, Miss Flennigan, whar you be gwine so soon this fine mornin?"

"Why I'm gwine to the quiltin at Miss Young blood's—aint youans be got no invite?"

"Invite? Sakes alive, weans aint even as much as hearn tell of it. And I be bound that's the work of that thar Katie Langford, a miserable, little, bigitty hussy. She didn't want my gals thar to out-shine her, and I be bound 'twar her doins that kept Miss Youngblood from sendin' us the invite."

To fail to get an "invite" to a quilting was a fearful blow to one's pride, and a discount to her social standing beyond reparation in "these parts,"

and no one could feel a thing of this kind more keenly than Mrs. Kelly and her "gals."

Katie was late reporting at the quilting that day. The conversation between Mrs. Kelly and Mrs. Flennigan was properly seasoned and dished out by the latter dame to those who sat around the quilting frame, due care being taken, of course, to prevent Mrs. Youngblood from hearing it.

"Miss Kelly is about right in her notion of that cretur," said Miss Tarrant, an elderly maiden lady who had no special business of her own, but did not hesitate to attend promptly to that of her neighbors. "Why, bless your life, I was thar tother day to see her mammy, and that impident little hussy sot thar the whole time with a pencil een one han an' a book een t'other; and thar she read and scratched, and scratched and read till nigh on to sun down. I told her she'd never make a woman worth any man's time, ef she didn't put them things outen her hans. I told her a broom handle would suit her hans a heap better'n that thar pencil and the rattle of a dishpan would do her a sight more good than all she could git outen that book."

"And what did she say then?" queried Miss Ma-

tilda Jones who had as unselfishly as possible watched Katie's rapid development and Zach's increasing affection for her.

"What did she say? Bless your soul, chile, she jess flung that little curl back offen her forehead, and turned them black eyes o' hern on me, and she pinte her forefinger pine blank at me, she did, and she said with her voice a tremblin:

'Miss Tarrant, God never made women to sweep and wash dishes all ther days and ef you had improved the talents God gave you, you might have made yourself worth some man's time and you wouldn't have been a long-necked skinny old maid to-day.'"

"Lor-sa-massy!" exclaimed a chorus of voices. "And did she say that, Miss Tarrant?"

"Course she did and more too; why that gal aint feeard of man nor devil. When she said that, I jist perlately told her that I would rither be a old maid with a long neck than to be tied to sich a thing as she was hankerin arter; for old Big Zach was nothin but a tub of mush, no how."

"Geminy, you did give her a good un," said

Mrs. Wampole, after the laughter had subsided. "Did that satisfy the little smarty then?"

"Lordy, no; why she jist up and said: 'Why, Miss Tarrant, Big Zach, as you call him, lights his pipe every mornin' with things better'n you is. Why you looks jist like somebody had tied your neck around a limb and left you there all summer to dry out; and now ma'm, thar's the door and thar's the road, you can take 'em both.'"

"And what did you do?" asked more than one.

"Me? why, I jist tuck 'em both, and anybody else would a done—"

"Good mornin, Katie, good mornin' honey, you are late this morning, but come right in, your company is always welcome in this house."

With this warm reception, Katie Langford was ushered by Mrs. Youngblood into the presence of the ladies sitting around the quilting frame,

With laughing eyes and cheeks aglow with the rich warm blood that flowed through her veins, the bright young girl whose entrance so unceremoniously checked the conversation around the quilting frame, promptly rendered her excuse for being

tardy, and, in a little time, was comfortably seated and rapidly plying her needle.

## CHAPTER IX.

The mountaineer was not a genius, but a patient, persistent worker. He was a man, with faith in himself and in God. During the next two years he did faithful, effective college work and "walked in his integrity." Then, again, he left college for a year to replenish his depleted purse. And it was during this "off year" that he had his severest trials.

Whatever may be said of the inhabitants of the mountain regions of North Carolina, and however amusing their vernacular may sound at times to the cultured ear, of one thing the reader may be sure: they are not all fools.

They saw that Zach, their own neighbor, a mountain boy born and reared among them, was not the same rough young man that left them to go to college a few years before. They knew,—the most ignorant of them could see,—that he was a broader, deeper, stronger man; a man becoming daily fuller of sympathy and love and better fitted

for being something and doing something in life. This, "all hands" admitted; but for that very thing, some people despised him. Verily, human nature is a strange thing. But Zach had his friends, staunch friends, men and women who believe in helping the young man who helps himself.

Beaver Dam Spring was a famous meeting place. Three quarters of a century ago, the mountaineers met there to hear Fourth of July orations, to take part in "gander pullings," to engage in target shooting, to fill up on the purest of "mountain-dew" and to settle old disputes by stripping to the waist, entering a ring and fighting it out "fist and skull."

In the 70's, political campaign meetings were held at this famous gathering place, and picnic parties assembled there, but "gander pullings" were no longer indulged in, human nature itself at last revolting against the cruelty of the sport.

When Zach announced on Tuesday that the school should have the next day as holiday on account of the campaign meeting at "Beaver Dam," there was general rejoicing, particularly on the part of the larger boys.

Wednesday was an ideal day, and many hundreds of mountaineers of both sexes took advantage of it to go to Beaver Dam and see the folks and hear the news. It was a good-natured crowd but candidates were numerous and industrious, and after a few hours, political excitement ran high.

There were no issues among the candidates for the House of Representatives, so each candidate tried to win votes by being as pleasant as he could and saying the things the least objectionable.

Zach, "The Perfesser," was a patient listener to everything that was said,—the wise and the unwise alike.

Things went well until the last speaker, Zeb Vance Watts, concluded his speech. In the course of his remarks, he said:

"Fellow citizens, as grand and glorious as our country is in her history and in her traditions, she would be infinitely grander and more glorious but for the contemptable fanaticism of some of her citizens. Our liberties have been taken from us one by one till after a while we will be shorn of all our glory and strength, and become a pauper band with

no will of our own and no power to execute it if we had it. Our fathers made their corn into liquor and drank and sold it at their pleasure. Now, you dare not do it for fear of being shot down like dogs by Northern scoundrels called revenue officers. I believe that every man has the God-given right, and ought to have the legal right, to make every grain of his corn into liquor, if he sees fit, and sell it wherever he pleases."

More than one revenue officer had "bit the dust" in the neighborhood of Beaver Dam, and this play upon the prejudices of the auditors brought forth round after round of applause.

"Go it Watts, by gosh, I'll vote fur you," cried a soggy moonshiner leaning against a tree hard by.

Encouraged by this enthusiastic applause, Watts the young barrister, threw his head and shoulders back, and, raising his voice till it penetrated many of the mountain fastnesses continued, "No fellow citizens, this infernal revenue law, put upon us by white-livered Yankees, is a curse to our civilization. The blood of some of your own fathers and sons, shot down in cold blood by these revenue officers, cries out to you for vengeance."



Here the voice of the speaker was drowned by the thunderous applause, and he concluded it was a good time to take his seat. The applause at last subsiding, several enthusiastic admirers cried out: "We'll send you, old boy. Hurrah for Watts!"

Zeb Vance Watts felt that he had covered himself with glory, and he took his seat with an air that said: "I have captured the whole crowd."

Not so. Scarcely had the last echo of the tumultuous applause died away down the valley, when a large, handsome man stepped upon the platform and asked permission of the chairman to make a few remarks. He was recognized at once as "Zach, the Perfesser," and more than one said: "Hush, thar's Zach; he's gwine to speak."

"That's right, Zach, talk it out!" exclaimed a half score of voices.

The mountaineer, standing erect and with the muscles of his face twitching slightly, said in a strong, clear voice that rang out over that immense crowd:

"My friends, I am no stranger to you. Born and reared among you, we have breathed the same

fresh air, imbibed the same independent spirit and loved the same mountain scenery. You are my people and I belong to the people of Beaver Dam Cove; for that reason I claim the right to speak very plainly to you today."

"Hurrah for Zach! Tell it to us, Zach; tell it to us!"

"I should not have opened my mouth, but for the speech made by Zebulon Vance Watts, Esq. Hearing that, I could not hold my peace without doing violence to my conscience, nor could I have kept silent and been true to your interests, or true to myself.

"By that speech the gentleman brings reproach upon the name of one of North Carolina's most distinguished citizens. The Hon. Zebulon Vance would not own his namesake today, if he could hear such utterances fall from his lips.

"I pity the man who, having learned a few things from books, concludes that all other people less favored than himself are soft-headed fools who may be led around by the nose by such a two-by-four lawyer as the Hon. Zebulon Vance Watts."

"Hurrah for our Zach!" "Tell it to him, Zach!"

"The gentleman convicts himself of inexcusable ignorance, or he attempts to play upon your passions and prejudices as if you were a set of ignor-amuses. Let him take either horn of the dilemma. In the one case, he shows himself a fool; in the other a knave."

Springing to his feet, Watts advanced a few steps toward the speaker and said in an excited way,

"Do you mean to question my veracity, sir?"

Turning his eyes full upon the barrister and pointing his finger directly at him, Zach said in a calm, penetrating voice:

"I mean to prove to this audience, sir, that you are either a fool or a knave; sit down and take your medicine like a man."

"Hurrah for Watts!" "hurrah for Watts!" screamed his admirers. "Knock him off the stand, Watts; pull his nose!"

Watts was not without his friends, by any means, nor was he a boy himself, balancing the

scales as he did at 220. But Zach's fighting blood was stirred, and never was the sarcasm of Wendell Phillips more withering than the defiant manner of this son of the mountains.

Watts took his seat, incurring thereby the displeasure of his half drunk henchmen.

"This man has talked to you very glibly of how things used to be," continued the mountaineer. "He tells you that there was a time when our fathers made and sold whiskey as freely as they drank in this mountain air. He might have told you there was a time when our fathers burnt witches at the stake—but do we do that now? He might have told you there was a time in the not distant past when our fathers just over there by that spring engaged in the fearful sport of gander pulling—do we do that now? He might have told you there was a time when just over the hill there our fathers gambled for beef and mutton by shooting at a target—do we do it now? No indeed. But why were these things not kept up? The times change and we change with them. As the years go by men become wiser and better, and we who live in the blazing light of the latter part

of the 19th century cannot approve of many things our fathers did. We honor their memories, emulate their virtues, but we do not propose to repeat their mistakes.

“The manner in which you vote will test, not only your own patriotism, but your intelligence. We don’t boast of much culture in Beaver Dam Cove, but God knows that our men are just as brave and just as patriotic as ever donned the blue or the gray, and our women are just as pure as the ‘icles that hang on Dian’s temple.’ I see among you men who followed Lee and Jackson with unfaltering tread. You have no apology for what you did, but when the sun of the Southern Confederacy was set, you laid down your arms and swore allegiance to the flag of our common country. I knew but little of my brave father who sleeps in a soldier’s grave in Virginia, but I believe if he were here today he would denounce the sentiment of the gentleman who seeks your votes by an attempt to arouse your prejudices and keep up the bitter feelings existing between the two sections of our great country.”

“Hurrah for Jim Whetstone! Hurrah for our Captain!”

This allusion to Captain Jim Whetstone was more than the old soldiers could stand. No more recklessly brave man than Jim Whetstone ever followed Wade Hampton to battle. This outburst of tumultuous applause was a voluntary tribute to the memory of the brave Confederate, and the honest, simple-minded veterans that looked into the face of the speaker before them knew that he was the “worthy son of a worthy sire,” and that he would fight for truth and right and sobriety with just as dauntless courage as was ever displayed by the gallant Captain on the bloodiest battle-field.

But Zach’s courage was to be tested.

## CHAPTER X.

After so completely routing Zebulon Vance Watts at the campaign meeting, Zach was the hero of Beaver Dam Cove. Old men who had known and loved his father, predicted for the young “Perfesser” a great future. They could see the fearlessness of the father in the son, and

could conceive of no higher type of manhood. Old ladies were enthusiastic in their praises of the young man, and the girls looked askance at Katie Langford; while the young men were divided into two groups—the one admiring, the other despising the companion of their boyhood days who had grown away from them—above them—since the day he first entered college.

In the old days, every county in North Carolina had its "bully;" and in some counties, that dignity has not yet "passed." His proud distinction is to be able to throw down and "lick" every other man in his county. In the early 70's, Mike Dixon was the bully of Rutherford County.

Joel Samiter was a country dude. He was rather slender, had the countenance of a fox, wore a red cravat, a "biled shirt," parted his hair in the middle, and tugged constantly at a wee bit of a moustache that vainly struggled for existence. He kept a little country store, too—this man Samiter—and sold "manifac" tobacco, real "man-ac," a few Virginia cheroots, and an occasional hank of yarn to some good housewife who needed

it in weaving her winter's supply of cloth. He was not accused of selling whiskey, but it was noticed that the moonshiners of the Cove were fond of gathering at his place of business.

Samiter was a great ladies' man, called himself "the smasher," and dangled more than one mountain lassie's scalp at his belt. He was a political heeler, too; was a bitter, scheming partisan, and was courted and flattered by local politicians.

Being an ardent admirer of Zebulon Vance Watts, Samiter felt chagrined by the drubbing given that gentleman by the "Perfesser" at the campaign meeting, and swore by all that was good and bad to humiliate the teacher.

But Watts' defeat was not the only grudge Samiter had against Zach: Katie Langford had snubbed "the smasher" the Sunday before, and, now, the "Perfesser" must be humiliated.

"Now I've got it, by gosh!" said Joel Samiter to himself one afternoon, after sitting for a long time in a brown study. "Now I've got it, and I'll have my revenge."



Without further soliloquy, Samiter saddled his horse and rode five miles to Bill Cartlet's.

The sun was just setting behind the hills when Cartlet, with his axe on his shoulder, crossed the road just in front of his cabin.

"Hello, Bill, old fellow, how you wuz? Whar you bin down dar wid dat axe on your shoulder pretendin' like you powerful industrious?"

Samiter was not a native of the Cove, or of the county, and had enjoyed considerably better educational advantages than his friends and patrons, but he was a good judge of human nature, and could drop into the vernacular of Beaver Dam with the greatest possible ease.

"Hello, yoself, Joel; I'm doin' tolerable cepin I'm monstus tired," drolled out Bill Cartlet, at the same time biting off a fresh chew from his twist of home-raised tobacco.

"Whut you bin doin wid dat axe, Bill?"

"Jist a choppin doun some dead trees over thar in de new groun I cleared lass year."

"Dat's so; I heard you wus a gwine ter have a log-rollin soon; is dat right?"

“Yes, dat’s right; I wus jist a thinking about pinten nex Wednesday week and axen the boys to come in and gi’ me a lift.”

“Now, Billy, old boy, dat’s jis whut I come to see you ’bout,” said Joel in his sweetest tones, dismounting the while from his frisky pony. “I heeard you wuz gwine to have a rollin, and I jis come over to chat you bout it, bein’s I knowed you speekin ter invite me, you an’ me bein’ sich good friends. You see, Billy, I want you to have the log-rollin on Sadday stiddier Wednesday.”

“And whut fur?” said Cartlet.

“Cause, you see—well, Billy—well, I’ll jist have ter let you in ter de secret. You an me is good friends an I know you’ll stand. I’ve got a plan.”

“Well, whut is it?”

“Set down here on this log an I’ll tell ye. You know, you an me an some the yuther boys wus powerful tuck back tother day when Zach chawed up Zeb Watts jes lak he did. Dat all-fired speech wus the thing whut beat Watts in the ’lection. Sho as Betsy’s my gal, dat done the work, and I

want ter git even wid Zach. Nuther thing: that gal er hisern, dat stuck up Katie Langford gi' me de cole shoulder lass Sunday, and I want ter make her feel bad. So I want you to have your rollin on Sadday an invite the teacher."

"Well, how de devil is dat goin ter git even wid him, or mek the little gal feel bad?"

"Now look er here, Bill, this betwixt me an you, an ter go no funder. You invite Mike Dixon and I'm goin to hire Mike to pick a fuss wid de Perfesser and lick him, by gosh! How's that?"

"Dat'll do very well," drolled Cartlet, squirting the yellow spittle through his fingers. "Dat'll do very well, providin Mike kin lick him."

"Lick him! My gosh, man, isn't Dixon the bully of the Cove?" asked Joel, excitedly, losing for the time the vernacular of the neighborhood.

"Yes, but he aint never tackled Zach Whetstone. Joel, did you see Zach's eyes when he spoke at the meetin'? Now I don't know everything, but I knows some things. That man will fight, an' he's a powerful man. They tell me he jist lak his daddy, and the old soldiers say the old Captain was a tiger in a fight. They say he

never let up, but jist shot his eyes and hilt on till the other fellow hollowed, 'calf-rope.'"

"Dat makes no diffunce," said Joel. "You ax Mike Dixon, an' he'll sho make Zach tote his cotton."

"O, I'll ax him; certainny, I'll ax him," said Cartlet. "I'll ax him, beca'se I don't object to seein' a little wool-pullin' myself."

"Alright, Bill, alright, old fellow. And you'll pint Sadday week as the day."

"Yes; Sadday week."

"Good boy! good night Billy!" and Joel flung himself into his saddle, and giving free rein to the restless Mustang, galloped over the hill, dreaming of his own revenge and Zach's humiliation.

## CHAPTER XI.

Saturday week dawned clear and bright. About thirty neighbors gathered early to help Bill Cartlet roll his logs. Zach, the "Perfesser" was among them, for though within one year of graduation and now regarded the best educated man in the cove, he was not above lending a helping hand to a neighbor as he had done from his youth up.

At that time, in that region, the "corn-shucking" and the "log-rolling" were to the men what the "quilting" was to the women. From a business point of view, these gatherings were beneficial to individuals, and socially were very helpful to all concerned.

At the "log-rollings," many a test of strength was made, for pulling at the "hand-stick" was the favorite method of measuring one's muscles. To be able to pull one's mate to his knees while lifting a heavy log was prima facie evidence of superior physical strength. In those days before the railroads had penetrated the mountain regions carrying with them the saw-mill, lumber was "no object," to express it in the language of the mountaineer; and when a clearing was made, the only thing that could be done with the timber was to pile the logs into great heaps and burn them.

When men entered the field to pile these logs, they were paired generally according to size. So at Cartlet's log-rolling, by common consent, Zach was paired with Mike Dixon, the "bully." It was a pair of powerful men. Dixon was a few pounds heavier, but both were muscular and agile as cats.

Many a heavy log yielded to the touch of the two giants, and in a few hours, the well-matched pair became objects of special interest to the entire crowd. At one time, the teacher succeeded in putting one knee of the Irishman on the ground. Mike claimed that he was fouled, but in the judgment of the witnesses, it was fairly done and was so declared. There was nothing for Mike to do but to accept their judgment. He yielded, but uttered one or two bitter oaths and leaned to his hand-stick again.

The contest was now exciting. Men left their own log-heaps to come and watch the two big fellows.

Joel Samiter was greatly excited and offered to bet his horse against the "mangiest calf in the cove" that the Irishman would pull the teacher down before night.

"I'll take that bet," said Uncle Joe Morrow, a very old man who came, not to assist in the work, but just to watch the young men exhibit their strength. "I'll take that bet, young man. You'll never see it done."

"Look out thar, you scoundrel, and keep off my toe!" It was Mike Dixon who spoke, and he was looking into the eyes of his mate, the teacher, who stood just beyond the log at the other end of his hand-stick.

"I beg your pardon," said Zach calmly. "I didn't mean to step on your toe, of course."

"You are a——liar," said the Irishman, "you done it on purpose."

"Mr. Dixon," said the mountaineer quietly, "I am sorry you said that, and unless you apologize for it I shall make *you* sorry."

"Apologize? Apologize to you, you son of a—?"

Zach turned a little pale and then said with a slight tremor in his voice:

"Now, then, sir, it's too late, you can't apologize. You've got to fight me."

"Fair fight, gentlemen, fair fight!" cried several, and Billy Cartlet proceeded to make a ring about fifteen feet in diameter.

A fight at a corn shucking or a log-rolling was not an uncommon thing; so all the other men gathered round the ring while the two giants walked

into the center. It was a great fight and destined to bring many surprises to that group of simple-hearted mountaineers.

Dixon had plenty of pluck; he really liked the business. He forced the fighting for a while, Zach guarding easily and cautiously, and hitting him on the nose just hard enough to draw a little blood and just often enough to keep him fighting furiously.

Gradually there came over the Irishman's face a look of amazement; he ceased forcing the fight and for a moment stood facing his opponent. For the first time he had met his match.

"Now, Dixon, will you apologize?" said the teacher, lowering his arms.

"No:——you, I won't!" he answered quickly.

Dixon was an Irishman, and would rather die than acknowledge defeat.

"Then I shall hurt you," said Zach, and suiting his actions to his words, he struck him one, two, three terrific blows, and put the Irishman on his back.

The mountaineer folded his arms across his



breast and waited till his dazed antagonist staggered to his feet.

"Will you apologize now?" he asked again.

"No; damn you!" was the stubborn reply.

"Then look out," said Zach; and the next instant the spectators saw Mike's feet in the air and his toes quivering.

"Foul play!" shrieked Samiter, and leaped into the ring with a long, keen bladed knife in his hand.

"Stop, thar!" It was Luther Satterwhite looking along the barrel of an old Colt's revolver. "You jist hold up, Joel, or I'll let the day ligh-into you."

Luther was one of the big boys in Beaver Dam school and loved his teacher. Samiter knew the reputation of the lad and staggered back to his place around the ring.

"He'd apologize now, Zachie, ef he could, but he'll never do it in this world, for in my judgment, he's passed in his checks."

It was Uncle Joe Morrow who spoke. He had seen many a fight, but never one "done so nice as that."

“Fling a leetle water in Mike’s face thar, boys, he’ll come all right arter awhile,” continued the old man.

“I didn’t mean to hit him quite so hard,” said the mountaineer, “I hope he’ll soon be better.”

Dixon groaned heavily. The teacher’s countenance brightened, and, looking down into the face of his antagonist, he said: “Gentlemen, I am sorry I had to do this,—the poor fellow is suffering.”

The fight broke up the log-rolling. Dixon pulled through and went home a wiser man, and Joel Samiter, instead of getting revenge was himself disgusted and humiliated beyond measure.

Zach disliked such notoriety as that day’s work would give him, but consoled himself with the thought that no self-respecting man could submit to such insulting language. Down in the mountaineer’s heart, he was glad that during the previous year he had spent so many of his recreation hours taking boxing lessons from a bosom friend and classmate. Dixon was as powerful as Zach, and as game as Cæsar, but Zach’s scientific blows knocked the Irishman out and opened the eyes of all who saw them.

## CHAPTER XII.

Sunday morning dawned clear and gray, and long before preaching time a great crowd of men, women and children had gathered at the church to discuss, recuss, and cuss the all-absorbing incident of the day before.

The average human being, whatever his stage of civilization, glories in a fight, and the inhabitants of Horse Foot were no exception to the rule. To lick Dixon, "the cock o' the walk," "the county bully," in a fair fight, "fist and skull," was an achievement calculated to put one's name on every tongue.

Zach regretted the occurrence, but he had no apologies to make. His notoriety was particularly embarrassing to him, when he walked up to the church and saw all eyes turned toward himself. And Zach knew, too, that in spite of the protestations of friendship made by so many of his neighbors after the memorable campaign meeting, there were many who would have been glad deep down in their hearts to see Dixon knock him out. He knew, too, that on that church

yard there were two factions, one, possibly the smaller, in full sympathy with all his efforts to improve himself and benefit the community; the other, the younger element, envious and jealous, and wishing him evil and only evil since he openly avowed his opposition to what they considered their most sacred right—the making and selling of “mounting dew.”

On the Eastern slope of Bald Mountain, known as “De Ball” by the denizens of its fastnesses, is a notorious cave. For many, many years, this cave was the home of wild beasts, as nature intended, and continued to be till wilder man drove them out and took possession for his own unlawful purposes. For more than fifty years, in one of its recesses, moonshiners had distilled their corn and apples. It was difficult of access, rock-ribbed and approachable only on one side. More than one officer of the law, having run the gauntlet and raided “The still,” “bit the dust” before he had reached the plains below. Jake Ilderton inherited the cave and the still with all their bloody traditions and from Steve Ilderton, his father,

who fell at the hands of "de revenue" while fighting for his own, just five years before. And it was Jake's own bullet that pierced the heart of the successful raider that moonlit night while he passed "de clump o' laurel jest beyant de bridge over Little Beaverdam." Jake was considered a desperate character, four men having fallen at the bidding of "long Tom," his rifle. But Jake was kind hearted. He was passionately fond of children, revered what he called "'oman kind," and would die for "truth and jestis" anywhere and any when. "I've got no usen," he often said, "fur a dowled coward er a sneak; I loves the open truth an' a far fight uver time."

'Twas Saturday night. The weather was warm and a half dozen mountaineers sat around on the heads of barrels and kegs as far as they could get from the heat of the still and yet within range of flickering rays of light given out by a sputtering, odoriferous, brass lamp. Among the loungers who had gathered to discuss the news of the week and to sample the latest output of apple-jack, were Joe Davis and Joel Samiter.

Three weeks had come and gone since the great log-rolling which came so near ending in a tragedy in which Zach, the teacher, had played so prominent a part. Samiter was sore yet over the defeat of Zeb Vance Watts, and sorer still over the lickin' Dixon, the bully, got at the log-rolling. Usually talkative, he was tonight quiet and meditative.

Davis was a small man with little wolfish eyes, dull, sandy hair that hung down over his shoulders, and a disgusting yellow beard, every end of which seemed to turn back upon its root as if endeavoring to hide itself out of pure shame and giving the face an appearance not unlike that of a yellow, frizzled chicken. His long, bony nose was out of plumb; it seemed to hang on one side of his face as if knocked out of joint by coming in too close contact with some man's fist. His upper teeth protruded so that he could not under any circumstances close his lips. There, surrounded by granite walls, in the dim, flickering, uncertain light of the brass lamp, he made a picture long to be remembered. To make up for the many things of which she deprived the unfortunate fellow,

nature gave him an extra-long tongue. Davis talked too much.

A little farther than the others from the red-hot door of the furnace was one man lying flat on his back on the dirt floor of the cave. Muscular and brawny was he, and lay with hands clasped under his head, while the stem of a cob pipe hung between his teeth, and clouds of smoke came from his lips in lazy, indifferent puffs. Jake Ilderton, king of Horse Foot Cove, laughed "in his sleeves" at the picture before him, and wondered, "whut een de name o' God was sich a lookin' thing ez Joe Davis put een dis wurl fur nohow?"

Each man "slept on his arms," as it were, for a rumor had been afloat for ten days that the raiders were on the war path and might be expected any night to make a swoop on Horse Foot still. According to the ethics of the cove, no man was expected to visit the still unless he was willing to defend it against all raiders and die for it if need be.

Every phase of the report was discussed, expe-

riences exchanged, and incidents of many previous raids were told and retold until long after midnight. All had heard that raiders were astir, but not one could give the name of the informer and that seemed to be of more interest to the party than the fact that a raid was imminent. In Horse Foot Cove, the unwritten law was, "The informer must die."

"I dassent say fur sartin," said Joe Davis, kicking the side of a barrel on which he sat, "I dassent say fur sartin, but I's jest bleegeed ter b'lieve dat de teacher is de man what gin de still away. I bleegeed ter think it. Ye see, two year ago and leetle better, when De Ball wus a-shakin' and folks was skeerdt ouden der shoes, a great big man and a lot o' yuther fellers kim up here fum sumus down een de flat. De called daselves students and pertended to be zaminin 'De Ball'; de stuck sumpin een de springs, and pecked on de rocks and medjured de hills, an' Zach kim 'long wid 'em an' showed 'em uver whar. Folks didn't lak it den kase Zack was wid 'em peekin' 'round de mounting. Some uv 'em 'lowed den Zach wus a-



gwine too fur. He des nachily covorted 'round de mounting pintin out uverthing.'

In the early 70's, Bald Mountain did behave in such a manner as to frighten the mountaineers. Dishes were rattled and broken and strange rumbling noises were heard. Prof. Warren DuPre of Wofford College, took his class in Geology to visit the mountain, and spent several days examining the rocks and springs.

"Some 'lowed de whole bilin uv 'em," continued Davis, "wus jes a-lookin' out fur de smoke o' de still."

"Den agin, Zach's gittin too all-fired smart. He don't talk lak weans no more. He wants uverbody to go to church and Sunday School. Ye know he tuk up a Sunday School 'bout a mont ago an' he wants uverbody to jine. He gits up an' talks, he do. He says sat stiddier sot an' all sich ez that. I tell ye he air a bad aig. Some says hes' a wolf in sheep's clothin'. He pertends ter be pow'ful 'ligious. Meks a prar ez long ez fum here ter de eend uv de cave. I went over lass Sunday."

“Did he do you enny good, Joe?” interrupted one.

“Me? no; how de devil ye spec him ter do me enny good?”

“Dat so, scuse me; I spec hit’d strain de Lord hisself to do good ter sich a critter ez you is.” Then a hearty laugh at Joe’s expense.

“Ge’mens, you oughter bin thar ter hear Miss Flennigin lambast Zach. ‘Zachie,’ she ’lowed, ‘I wus glad whenst ye tuk up the Sunday School, an’ hit did do my ole heart good so long ez ye teached the childurn ’bout the Lord an’ sich; but now whenst ye git ter tellin’ ’em ’bout obeyin’ de law and bein’ good and keepin’ sober, I haint no furdur use fer ye,—I’m agin ye.’”

“Old Zach ’lowed, ‘Why, Miss Flennigin, don’t you want the childurn teached to be good and obey the law?’”

“An’ what did she say?”

“Lord, mun, you oughter seed her eyes. She jes rared back on her hunkers, she did, and she ’lowed, ‘No, sir, narry time; not sich laws ez weans hes. Don’t you know ez how my daddy wus kilt by the revenues, and does you spec me

ter teach my childurn to 'bey de law arter dat? No, sir, an' ef I wus jes a man I would mek you stop sich teachin' ez this, er I'd let the day-light thoo ye'."

"An whut did Zach say?"

"Gosh man; he turned jes ez red ez a beet, he did, an' he 'lowed: 'Miss Flennigin, ye air a 'oman, an' kin say whut you please; I can't holp myself. If ye wus a man, you wouldn't. I'm agin stillin' an' I'm agin law-breakin. I'm gwine ter teach the childurn to 'bey the law an' let liquor 'lone'."

"Boys, sho ez ye air born, Zach air the man we air arter. Jest say the word," patting the long, blue barrel of his rifle, "an' I shall put 'im ter sleep."

"Waal, do it Joe; do it afore another Sat'day night."

"Dat's right," seconded two or three.

"Shet yo' durned mouths, ye set o' white-livered cowards. Here ye be a-plannin' fur ter kill a man jes bekase he air got the grit ter stan' up and tell ye whut he b'lieves air right. Shame on ye, ye cowardly curs."

It was Jake Ilderton why spoke, and he was now leaning on one elbow and shaking his fist at the men who had listened so patiently to Davis's harangue.

"An you, Joe Davis," he continued, "ye dinged, little measley, skeeter, Zach kin tek ye atwixt his fingers and blow ye over de Ball, be he mind ter. Ye aint no bigger'n a jay bird, but ye kin mek ez much fuss wi' that thar bill o' yourn ez ef ye was a woodpecker shor nuff. Say another word, ye misble, little, biled owl, an' I'll chuck ye head fo'most into this here furnis."

Jake Ilderton was king in Horse Foot Cove: his ipse dixit was law. Joe Davis had no more to say.

"Now listen, you fellers," continued Ilderton—after refilling his pipe—"listen ter me and I'll tell ye sumpin:

"I hearn this report. So lass Sat'day I got to thinkin' 'bout it an' I jes thunk 'bout it til I got desprit. I thunked 'bout that night when pap wus kilt and I jest mounted my horse and rid out 'cross the kintry thar and hopin' an' a-prayin' I

mout meet some revenue sneakin round. I wanted ter kill somebody. I kim in sight o' Zach's. I jes says, 'well I'll ride over and see Zach an' ef he don't talk right I'll put a eend ter him'. Zach was plantin' turnip seeds. I says, 'good evenin'.'

"Zach 'lowed, 'why howdy, Jake, I'm glad ter see you; light.'"

"I says, 'no, I haint time,—come ter the fence, Zach.' He kim."

"Now says I, 'I have hearn that the raiders air around an' that ye air the informer. I kim over to find out if dat is true'."

"I jest hilt my han' on my pistol, an' hit cocked and Zach seed me, but he nuver flickered; he jes zackly looked me square een the eye. Den he 'lowed,"

"Now, look a-here, Jake, air you crazy. Don't you know I don't drink liquor? Air I uver bin ter your still? I don't know whar it is. How kin I inform whar it is. No, Jake, dat ain't my business. I'm agin liquor an' agin makin' it, but my work is ter teach the childurn to let it alone and arter awhile there'll be none o' it made. Now,

Jake, ef you wants ter shoot me fur dat, jes drap in your little pills here fast ez you please, ' an' he jes nachily pulled open his shirt bosom an' hilt it open an' looked me straight in the eye."

"I knowed the man wus a-telling the truth, an' I jes nachily tuck my han' off my gun an' says, 'scuse me, Zach, I mought knowed 'twus a lie. So menmy people hev laid it on ye, I 'cluded I'd jes drap een an' ax ye'."

"I tell ye, boys, a man whut the childurn lays sich store by can't be a informer. Bless your soul, my little Dorinda jes thinks her teacher is nachily de bess man on de yearth, an' thar's Luther Satterwhite says Zach is a born gen'man. Guess you 'members Luther, don't you, Joel? De bess grit een de Cove, ef he is jis a boy."

Jake had not mentioned this interview before, being heartily ashamed of even suspecting the teacher; but now felt constrained to talk of it and to use the harsh language he did when he heard his companions planning to kill the best man in the neighborhood.

Day was breaking when the crowd dispersed.

Davis was smarting under the language used by Jake Ilderton. Nudging Samiter at the mouth of the cave, he said, holding up his long rifle: "Joel, she kin talk jes ez strong ez Jake,—lay low."

### CHAPTER XIII.

Monday morning early found Joe Davis crawling over logs and rocks picking his way through underbrush toward the road leading from Zach's home to the school house. Taking advantage of the rumor current, he determined to "put Zack to sleep," despite the cursing he got from Jake. At eight o'clock Zach passed within range of his rifle. Joe raised his gun but his hand trembled and he lowered the piece without touching the trigger. He cursed himself for a coward, and the next morning, having selected another position, repeated the effort with the same result. Now thoroughly disgusted with himself, he determined to make one more attempt. So in the afternoon of the next day, he squatted behind a huge chestnut tree over whose roots Zach would walk on his return home after school.

The shouts and laughter of the children as they

made their way over the hills and across the valleys, informed him that school was out. Nervous and excited, he clutched his rifle and looked intently through an opening in the laurel through which he expected to shoot the teacher.

The murderous intent of the assassin was so great that he neglected the opening in his rear and knew not that any one was near him until the cracking of a dry stick turned his eyes like a flash behind him. There, within six feet of him and lookin with astonishment upon him, was Katie Langford.

Joe's embarrassment was pitiable. A flash of lightning from that clear sky would not have disturbed him so.

"What in the world are you doing here, Mr. Davis?" said the astonished girl.

"O, good evenin', Miss Katie; how does youans do?"

"What are your doing here, sir?" she demanded.

"O, I jes heeard a turkey gobble, and wus jes a watchin' here ter see ef I couldn' git a crack at him."

The indignant girl said no more, but walked by



him with a glance that said, "I know your little game and I've spoiled it." And she had. Katie kept the path for a hundred yards and stepped out into the public road where she had promised to meet Zach and go across the ridge to visit a mutual friend. Davis sneaked off through the laurel toward the hovel he called his home, and, gritting his teeth, declared with an oath that Providence didn't intend to have a hair of the teacher "toch."

Katie was trembling with excitement when Zach took her hand in his. She told him quickly, almost breathlessly of her discovery, and urged him to take steps at once to have the would-be assassin arrested and incarcerated as a precautionary measure.

Zach laughed at the girl's agitation, but assured her that the danger was now past. "Davis," said he, "is a contemptible little coward, mean enough to shoot me from ambush, and he is no doubt hired by some other scoundrel to do that; but now that he has been discovered in the very effort to do the dirty deed, he dare

not go farther. Your coming, however, Katie was indeed providential. Joe Davis is a sneak, and, I believe for one silver dollar, would kill his best friend. But, though very low in the scale of humanity he is no fool, and I shall have no more trouble from him."

The trembling girl, grateful for her providential coming dropped her head on the shoulder of her lover and sobbed like a child. Zach kissed her tears away and lead her off toward the home of their friend.

That evening when Zack left his sweetheart on the steps at her father's door, he asked her to go with him on Saturday afternoon to visit the family of Jake Ilderton.

Said he, "I believe Mrs. Ilderton is a good woman: her children are so neat and clean and polite. No one but a good mother could send from her home such children as those. As a teacher I want to know all I can about the homes of my pupils." Katie was delighted to accompany him, but would not let him leave her that night without a promise to keep a sharp eye out for Joe Davis.

Mrs. Ilderton was not expecting company Saturday afternoon, but everything was neat and tidy. The very chairs had been scoured that morning, and every particle of the inexpensive furniture, touched here and there by a gentle woman's hands, was inviting.

The large old-fashioned fire place was filled with evergreens, and old Steve Ilderton's clock stood in the corner and lazily ticked off the fleeting moments. A picture of George Washington hung over the front door, and one of Andrew Jackson over the door leading to the kitchen. The milk "piggin" and the churn, faultlessly clean, stood inverted on a shelf just outside the kitchen door. The children, little Jake and Dorinda, were clean and neatly attired, and vied with each other in welcoming "de teacher and Miss Kate." Jake Ilderton "happened in" a few minutes after the arrival of the guests and joined heartily with his wife and little ones in giving them welcome.

During the afternoon, Jake and Zack walked out to look at Jake's "turnip patch." "Dat slipe o' lan' over thar," said the host, "I'm gwine ter

fix fur a brag piece o' wheat. I wants ter hev a ten rail fence put 'round it, an' den haul out on it sixty loads o' stable manure. Does ye reckon I kin git ole Jack ter do dat wurk fur me?" he asked.

"No; Uncle Jack is suffering with rheumatism. He can't do a lick o' work now. My school will close next Friday. After that, I should be very glad to do your work for you, Jake."

"Why, Zach, is ye jokin'? I knowed ye didn't mind splittin' rails, but I 'lowed ye hed sholy got above scatterin' manure," said Jake.

"No, indeed, not if there is an honest dollar in in. I'm not afraid to do any kind of work that's honorable. I need all the money I can get. I must go back to college again before long. I'll do that work for you and do it well and as cheap as anybody."

"Waal, sir, I'm jest powerful glad to git ye, Zack; I kin git a han' fur fifty cents a day, but I'll jest adzackly gi' ye seventy-five cents a day and board ye. I'll jest do that very thing—whut says ye."

"Just my dinner," said Zach. "I shall be

obliged to take care of mother at night, so I'll get breakfast and supper at home."

"All right," said Jake. "Ef that suits ye, hit suits me; but the wittles is here fur ye, Zach, an' ye air more'n welcome."

"Then look for me soon Monday morning week to begin work," said Zack, and the two returned to the house.

After a pleasant afternoon, the visitors turned their faces homeward. Jake excelled himself in his efforts to show them that he appreciated their visit.

Dorinda flung a kiss at Zack as he turned to close the gate, and then said to her mother: "Mamma, I do wush you could hear Mr. Zack prayin' fur weans uver mornin' at school."

"Do he pray fur weans, honey?"

"Yes, ma'am, he do."

"I knowed he wus a good man, but I didn't thunk he tuck time to pray fur weans." And with tear-dimmed eyes the mother turned her face toward the kitchen.

Mrs. Ilderton was a pale-faced little woman

without culture, but with the bounding, throbbing heart of a devoted mother; a heart that knew "its own sorrow." A pleasant smile flitted across her face at intervals, but underneath it and back of all her efforts to appear cheerful, there was an indefinable something that told of unacknowledged heartaches, of a sorrow that must be buried in one's own heart and burn itself out in a single life.

Zach was accustomed to study human nature closely. During the afternoon he had diagnosed this case successfully.

Mrs. Ilderton had, at the age of fifteen, "run-off" from her parents and married Jake Ilderton, a well-known, much-dreaded young moonshiner. Jake had been kind to her—as kind as he knew how to be. Their first four children were buried near the base of the big boulder overlooking the spring—the two little ones were left to Jake and his Margaret.

"Mrs. Ilderton's face is a study," said Zack to Katie as they walked homeward. "She has buried four children, I know, but that fact will not account for that look of hers—she has a living

trouble. She is a Christian, and devoted to her children, and craves a better life for them. I believe it is Jake's life that's drying up her heart and scorching her very life. God pity her."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

School closed Friday, August 31. Monday morning bright and early Zach stood at Jake Ilderton's gate. He carried with him a heavy maul and wedge and a long, keen-bladed axe. He was ready for business.

"Good mornin', Zachie, good mornin'; we ain't done eatin' yit, kim in and tek a bite," was the welcome he received.

"No, thank you, Jake—I've had breakfast."

"Waal, come in an' wet yo' goozle."

"No, thank you."

"You won't kim in and tek a drap o' apple-jack jes fur yo' stumick sake?"

"No, excuse me, Jake, I don't need it; my stomach digests all I'll give it. Hard work is better for me than apple-jack."

"Waal, dad-burn sich a critter."

The two men walked off toward the woods where the rails were to be split.

"Now, Zach," said Jake, "here's the timber; light een, and I'll step back and finish breakfast and then go to my work at the still."

"Yes, I wish you would just quit that work, Jake, once and forever, and come along and help me split these rails."

"Tut, man, don't ye know hits a heap easier ter mek liquor an' sell it than hit is ter dig a livin' outen these rocks?"

"Easier, now, Jake, but you are damming up the waters; you are piling up trouble for yourself and for your children," said Zack. "Look out."

"O, you be durned, Zach, and stop ye preachin'; I didn't hire ye ter preach—I hired ye ter split rails."

Jake Ilderton was a shaggy, uncouth thing to be called a man, but he loved his children with a devotion that was beautiful, and Zach's allusion to the curse he might bring upon them stung him to the quick. He cared nothing for himself, but he went to his still that morning an unhappier man.



The timber was fine and the weather was perfect. So Zach set for himself a task of 250 rails a day. He was now within one year of his diploma. His health was splendid, his mother was alive, and with a few more dollars he would have enough money to take his diploma and "owe no man anything." These thoughts passed through his mind, quickened his pulse-beat and the strong man drove his keen blade into the large timber with such force as sent it almost to the eye of the axe and brought great beads of sweat to his manly forehead. Zack really enjoyed the work. He was alone but in good company. In the last few years he had learned enough of the mysteries of nature to wonder how any one could ever feel lonesome with a book of such marvelous beauty spread wide open before him. Every stone had for him a message now; while every bud or bird was to him a printed page.

The midday meal with Jake's interesting family was immensely enjoyed. The conversation took rather a wide range for such a company. Jake was glad to go to the house when the dinner horn

blew, while the pale-faced mother, Dorinda and little Jake, so fond of the teacher, found the dinner hour all too short.

Things went well till Friday. Dorinda complained of "feelin' bad" and refused to eat. Zach examined the child's pulse and found that she had high temperature. He remarked that the child had considerable fever and ought to have a doctor to see her at once.

Jake sent off for Dr. Rawsheur.

"He's jest a 'yearb doctor,' but he's all we hes in these parts, an' uverboddy sends fur 'im," said the father.

Dr. Rawsheur came, said the child was "tolerable sick" and gave her a strong concoction made of some roots taken from his mink-skin bag.

"The leetle gal 'll be better in a day er two," he said as he went down the steps, "but I'll kem back termorrow jest to see how she's gittin' along." He came, and came again, changing his "yearb tea" every time.

On the fourth day the fever was raging, the child was very red and restless and begged for

Zack to remain by her side. Zach took the father to one side and said: "Jake, Dorinda is a very sick child. I don't know, but I'm afraid she has scarlet fever."

"My God!" ejaculated the distressed father. He remembered the terrible scourge just beyond Bald mountain about six weeks before.

"Great God, Zach, whut shill I do?"

"Don't get excited, Jake, we must have a doctor. Send for Dr. Jones. He lives fifteen miles from here, but he has treated scarlet fever and you must have him."

Jake lost no time in getting Jim, his hired man, off after Dr. Jones. "Don't spar ole Fannie, Jim," he said. "Fetch the Doctor, ef you hev to leave the ole mar dead een the road."

Jim loved Dorinda, as did every one who knew the yellow-haired child of eight summers. He rode hard and fast over the mountain, Fan, the sinewy, little chestnut-sorrel, responding without a protest to every touch of his heavy heel. But the doctor was away from home, and Jim rode far into the night before he found him.

At 8 o'clock the next morning Dr. Jones dismounted at the gate of the notorious Horse Foot moonshiner.

Jake and Zach and the faithful mother had sat through the long weary hours of the night watching by the side of the little sufferer. Just before day there was slight evidence of delirium. Zach noticed the first symptom—he was watching for it; but he said nothing of it, hoping that the parents might not observe it. The child clasped her hands and uttered a prayer that she had heard her teacher make at school, and then clutched at some imaginary object.

Poor Jake! he trembled now; and said in a half sobbing way, "Zachie, fur God's sake, ain't she teched een her mind?"

Before the sympathetic teacher could speak, the child turned her eyes toward the door and said in a sweet, childish, pleading voice, "Come in, he won't hurt ye." And then as if disappointed, she turned her eyes on Jake, and said, "Pappy, them's angels, but they won't come in—they air skeerdt o' you."

Sweet, patient and gentle Margaret Ilderton buried her face in her hands, large tears ran down the cheeks of the faithful teacher and poor Jake sobbed piteously.

"We'll not give her up yet, Jake," said Zach, applying another cold cloth to her parched brow. "We'll take her to the Great Physician," pointing upward, "and ask Him to help Dr. Jones when he comes."

Dr. Jones stepped into the room. With just a nod at the three anxious watchers, he walked to the side of the bed, and looking down into the face of the child, said slowly but emphatically, "s-c-a-r-l-e-t f-e-v-e-r."

The intelligent physician who had treated so many cases of scarlet fever, knew what to do and went to work without loss of time.

The distressed father watched his every movement. After a while he said, "Doctor, kin ye save the leetle gal?"

"God Almighty knows, my friend," was the reply. "I'll do the best I can, but I tell you now, she's a desperately ill child."

That was poor consolation to poor, ignorant Jake Ilderton. His heart sank within him; he ran out into the yard and wept bitter tears. "My God," he said, "ef I knowed how to pray, I'd pray; but I nuver prayed, I can't pray." Then looking up, he said, "Jesus, spar my leetle gal." Miserable, O, how miserable was poor Jake! He couldn't stay out of the house, and he couldn't stay in. His very heart strings were being torn as never before.

The faithful physician watched patiently by the side of the little child until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Then giving explicit directions to Zach and the mother, he remounted his tired horse and rode back across the mountains. He promised to be back before 10 o'clock tomorrow if he could, but charged them to watch closely, for he believed the crisis would be reached before another sun would rise.

At 8 o'clock in the evening, the child was quiet and resting. A neighbor, a sensible woman had come in to help watch through the night. To her and the mother, Zach repeated the directions of

the physician and told them he would run over to see how his mother was getting on; he promised to be back in an hour.

A hundred yards from the house Zach repeated the words: "And a little child shall lead them." He looked back and saw poor, wild Jake standing in the door, looking up at the stars and wringing his hands. Then turning his own eyes toward the heavens where the stars were twinkling, the big-hearted teacher said: "Father, spare the dear child if it please Thee, but whether she live or die, save Jake Ilderton, save Jake Ilderton!"

Jake sat down by the little one's bed, and with the great rough hand of a loving, suffering father, he touched as gently as he could the hand of the child he loved better than his own life. The little sufferer opened her eyes for a second, and then, in a clear, distinct voice uttered two words, "blood, whiskey."

Jake Ilderton knew nothing for several minutes. When he regained consciousness, he ran out into the yard, threw himself on his knees, and lifting his eyes toward the hills, cried out in all the anguish of his soul:

“O, God, hev it kim ter this! hev it kim ter this? Is ye tek in’ the child fur my doin’s? O, Lordy, spar my chile and tek me. I ain’t no ’count, tek me. I bin a mighty mean man, but I’m mighty sorry fur it. Please, Jesus, jes spar the leetle gal. I been a mean man. I kilt four men. I kilt Josh Lindsay, but I wus young then an’ didn’t know no better. I kilt Cy Bell. He cussed me an’ I kilt ’im. Lordy, I’m mighty sorry. ’Then I kilt Ben Fowler. He ruint my sister, Lord, an’ hed to kill ’im, I jes had to kill ’im. ’Then I kilt the revenue. He kilt my daddy, an’ I jes kilt him. I’m mighty sorry, Lord, but I can’t fetch ’em back ter life. O, Lordy, spar the leetle gal an’ I’ll nuver kill another man ez long ez I live. Spar my chile, O, Lord, an’ I’ll jine the church, I’ll quit cussin’.”

Poor, helpless Jake! the light of his home was about to be extinguished, and he was in the darkness of despair. Staggering to the fence he cried out once again, “O, Jesus, Marster, spar de leetle gal! jes spar de leetle gal an’ I’ll sarve ye right. Spar my leetle Dorinda, Lord, an’ I’ll nuver mek



another drap o' apple-jack, an' I'll lick enny man dat tries ter mek it in Horse Foot Cove. O, Jesus, spar Dorinda an' I'll buss de haid outten uver bar'l o' apple-jack I've got, Lordy, sp—"

Jake leaped to his feet and ran into the house. His countenance was all aglow. "Dorinda wil get well," he cried, "Dorinda will git well; sumpin' told me so!" He was about to take Dorinda in his arms, but was prevented by the faithful wife, who pleaded with him to keep quiet and not wake the child now resting. Zach returned after awhile and found Jake in the yard leaping for very joy and praising God for his promise.

The crisis was passed. Dr. Jones arrived at 9 next morning, and as soon as he glanced at the child, said, "Dorinda is better this morning."

Jake was standing at the Doctor's back when he heard the words, "Dorinda is better," he dropped on his knees and cried out: "Thank God! I telled ye so! I telled ye so!" Then turning, with one bound cleared the steps and ran rapidly toward the still.

Jim, his assistant, was there at work. "Roll

uver bar'l o' apple-jack out here, Jim," Jake shouted, "roll 'em out an' let me send 'em to hell whar they belong."

Jim protested against such great waste.

"Shet yo' mouth," cried Jake. "I promised the Lord, and ivery drap shall go."

Seizing an axe he began bursting in barrel heads, and ripe old apple-jack commenced rolling in a great stream down the mountain side. "Go, ye be bit o' hell-fire! Go back to the yearth fum whenst ye kin!" he shouted. "I'll nuver mek another drap o' ye, an' I kin lick enny man whut tries ter mek ye een Horse Foot."

Jake Ilderton had entered into a solemn covenant with Margaret's God. He joined the church, told his experience reverently, and all the cove saw that the notorious moonshiner was another man. The whole congregation listened in profound silence, many of them in tears, to Jake's experience. Wiping his moist eyes on his coat sleeve, he closed with these words:

"Friends, I hev been a mighty mean man; but I mean to serve God the balance 'o my days. I

haint no larnin', ye know, an' can't talk fur 'im much an' I can't sing, but, thank God, I kin fight fur 'im, an' hit will jest gi' me pleggure to do it. I gin ye warnin' now, friends, I promised the Lord I would lick enny man what tries to mek liquor in Horse Foot, an' I'll do it. He spar'd my leetle Dorinda an' furgive my sins an' now I'm His'n to the eend uv life.''

Strong men wept that day, and more than one woman shouted aloud the praise of Almighty God. Margaret Ilderton's pale face was now radiant. A flood of light had come into her darkened soul, and for her, life had a purer, sweeter, nobler meaning.

## CHAPTER XV.

Having mended shoes for his neighbors, having dug ditches, split rails, scattered manure—having done anything to earn an honest penny, Zach re-entered college now for the last time, set his face toward the coveted goal and resolutely fought his way through difficulties until he reached the end of his senior year.

The much dreaded final examination is passed,

and the mountaineer feels that he has fought a good fight. And he has. He has made a good record as a student, he has maintained his integrity, he has honestly won his diploma, and he can look the world in the face and say of a truth: "I owe no man anything."

It is commencement day again. Eight long years have passed since the mountaineer first entered that auditorium. Then, he sat in a pew, an obscure backwoodsman; today he sits on the rostrum, the most observed, because he is the largest and handsomest man of the class—he has won his place by persistent, uncompromising blows.

The speakers were arranged in alphabetical order, the mountaineer's name beginning with W., appearing last on the program, and the subject of his address, "Labor Omnia Vincet."

The other speeches delivered, the venerable president of the college briefly related the incident of a young mountaineer's accidental attendance upon the commencement exercises in that hall eight years before, and of his resolve before he left the auditorium to speak on that platform some

day himself. Then he alluded to the young man's fight with poverty, his manly independence, his unflinching courage, his high sense of honor, his devotion to duty, and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me real pleasure to introduce as the next speaker that same mountaineer, Mr. Zachariah Timothy Whetstone, of North Carolina."

There had never occurred in that hall at any other time such a demonstration of popular feeling. The kind but truthful words just spoken by the president, the mountaineers great popularity among the students and in the city, his magnificent physique and striking personality—all these set the audience wild.

The distinguished looking gentleman about whom so many questions had been asked by strangers present, advanced to the front of the stage, but the applause was so great and continued so long, he could not begin his address. He politely bowed his appreciation, but that only increased the demonstration. The college boys in the galleries thundered their applause as only boys can do, enthusiastic ladies wore their delicate fans to frazzles on the back of seats and gray-bearded

men with moistened eyes clapped their hands in hearty approval; nor did this cease until the president raised his hand in appeal to the audience. The mountaineer became a little nervous, his muscles twitched slightly, but his accustomed smile played all the while over his handsome face. He uttered the first sentence in clear, distinct tones that penetrated the remotest corner of the spacious auditorium, and again the applause was renewed and continued several seconds.

There was one woman near the rostrum who did not join in the applause. While others around her applauded, she buried her face in her hands and wept; wept not tears of grief or sorrow, but sweet, precious, joyous tears—the man thus honored was her baby boy.

The exercises concluded, the president of the college and many distinguished visitors hastened to congratulate the happy mother of the hero of the occasion. The proud mother was too full to express her thanks, but looked them through her smiles and tears, and in her heart, thanked God for him, who to her, was the greatest man on earth.

The mountaineer, as soon as he could free himself from the hands of his admiring classmates and fellow-students, made his way to his mother and imprinting upon her happy face an affectionate kiss, handed her his diploma, saying: "Here, mother, take this; it is yours, not mine." She clutched the parchment and pressed it to her heart. She knew she could never read it for it was written in Latin, but she also knew that it was the testimonial of the greatest triumph of her son. Then, mother and son, arm in arm, walked out of the hall, the embodiment of unalloyed, immeasurable happiness.

Has the reader become sufficiently interested to wonder what became of the subject of this sketch? You shall know. He returned to his mountain home, and as soon as he was able, erected on his own land a neat, commodious school building in which, during all these years, he has conducted a successful, prosperous high school. He has managed his mother's little farm well, has bought lands adjoining it, and is pastor of three Baptist churches nestled among the hills he loves so well. The

Rev. Zachariah Timothy Whetstone is the best beloved and most influential citizen in all that mountain region, and his hard common-sense, successful school and fearless preaching have done more than all the laws and guns of Uncle Sam to stop illicit distilling in that highly favored section of North Carolina.

Old Jack was faithful to the end of his days and now sleeps in a well-kept grave near the Big Gum Spring. Towser and Zeno long ago ceased to challenge the raccoon and the squirrel. Each had a decent burial; the faithful master saying: "The good old dogs always did the best they could—what living thing could do more?"

Did Zach marry Katie? She is the mistress of his home, the guiding star of his life, and both are happy in the lives of their two children, little Katie, the duplicate of her mother, and young Zach, "a chip off the old block."

The aged mother still lives to bless the home of her stalwart son, and every Sunday hears the gospel preached by him into whose baby ears she first whispered the name OF JESUS.

THE END.











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